



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICE

HF 1-35
Public Health Service m2706n
Food and Drug Administration
New Orleans District
Southeast Region
4298 Elysian Fields Ave.
New Orleans, LA 70122
Telephone: 504-589-6341
FAX: 504-589-6360

June 2, 1999

WARNING LETTER NO. 99-NOL-32

FEDERAL EXPRESS
OVERNIGHT DELIVERY

Mr. Albert J. Gros, President
Gros Bayou Fish Company, Inc.
1217 St. Patrick Street
Donaldsonville, Louisiana 70346

Dear Mr. Gros:

On April 22, 1999, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) conducted an inspection of your fish and crawfish processing facility, located at 1217 Patrick Street, Donaldsonville, Louisiana. Our investigator documented numerous objectionable insanitary conditions in your processing operation. This causes your finished products, processed catfish, buffalo fish and drum, to be adulterated within the meaning of Section 402(a)(4) of the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act.

Objectionable insanitary conditions included: 1) black residues were encrusted on two plastic buckets holding dressed catfish in the chill tank filled with ice and water; 2) grayish residues were on the inside walls of the metal chill tank holding baskets of dressed catfish; 3) water from a leaking faucet/hose connection splashed from the faucet onto the dirty wall and then into the chill tank; 4) dark brown residues were encrusted on a plastic shovel resting on the catfish skinning table; 5) catfish were in direct contact with a wet, dirty wooden board laying on a processing table; 6) a set of keys, two plastic containers of beverages and a wooden handled hook were on the processing table; 7) dark brown residues were encrusted on the fiberglass cutting board used by an owner; 8) wet newspapers, which became soiled and bloody as operations progressed and kept under two cutting boards, directly contacted processed fish; 9) no sanitizing solution in the processing room; 10) one employee came into the processing room from outside on four separate occasions and did not wash his hands before handling processed catfish and an owner came in and processed catfish on two occasions without washing his hands; 11) an owner was wearing a watch and a bracelet and was not wearing an apron while leaning against the table processing fish; 12) an employee's hair was not completely covered by his cap; 13) an employee touched a dirty plastic bag covering the monitor on the scale that is used to weigh dressed fish, and then handled dressed fish in pans without sanitizing his hands; 14) knives and fish skinners were wedged between a water pipe and the dirty wall of the processing room; 15) the two plastic strip curtains at the entrance to the cooler had black residues encrusted

on them; 16) a pungent foul odor was present in the cooler while lugs and boxes of discarded catfish viscera from previous days' operations were in the cooler; 17) lugs of whole fish and partially processed fish were stored directly against the walls of the cooler which were encrusted with dark brown residues; 18) brown residues were encrusted on the door and door handle of the cooler, on the door handles of the glass double doors between the outside porch and the processing room, and on the door between the retail market and the processing room; 19) blocks of ice and sacks of crawfish are kept in a cooler with wooden floorboards that were exposed in an approximately 7' x 4' area inside this cooler by its door; 20) water steadily dripped from the drain pipe under the refrigeration unit directly onto a block of ice beneath it. Ice blocks are chipped and used to cool fish in the chill tank; and, 21) at least 100 live flies outside the catfish processing plant. Flies were in the cookroom and peeling room for the retail crawfish processing, on the cement parking area, and on spare equipment outside.

Also noted, your "SSOP Daily Checklist" dated April 22, 1999, had checkmarks under the "GO" heading for all sanitation items listed yet deficiencies were noted in the above items regarding cleanliness of food contact surfaces, prevention of cross contamination, lack of sanitizing solution.

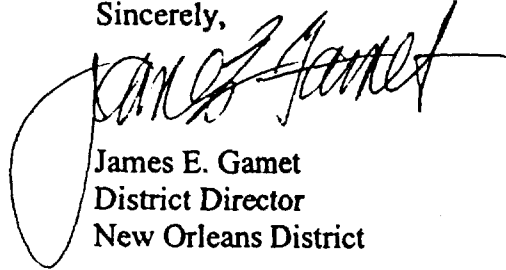
Several of the above violations also were noted during the previous inspections of March 24, 1998, and addressed in an untitled letter sent to your firm on July 10, 1998. These observations include: 1) encrusted residues from previous operations on product contact equipment; 2) a strong foul odor of decomposition and containers of fish viscera in the cooler; 3) ice stored directly on a wet dirty floor; 4) no sanitizing solutions available in the plant; and, 5) numerous employee practices which could lead to cross contamination of the firm's products.

The above identification of violations is not intended to be an all-inclusive list of deficiencies at your facility. It is your responsibility to assure adherence with each requirement of the applicable regulations. You should take prompt action to correct these deviations. Failure to promptly correct the deviations may result in regulatory action without further notice. These include seizure and/or injunction.

You should notify this office in writing, within 15 working days of receipt of this letter, of the specific steps you have taken to correct the noted violations, including an explanation of each step being taken to prevent the recurrence of similar violations. If corrective action cannot be completed within 15 working days, state the reason for the delay and the time within which corrections will be completed.

Your reply, relating to these concerns, should be addressed to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Attention: Marie K. Fink, Compliance Officer, 4298 Elysian Fields Avenue, New Orleans, Louisiana 70122-3896. If you have any questions regarding the implementation of the HACCP regulations, you may contact Ms. Fink at (504) 589-7166.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James E. Gamet", written over a large, stylized loop.

James E. Gamet
District Director
New Orleans District

Enclosure: FDA-483